On a July morning of flat calm, the schoolmaster watched with cameras on target as, suddenly, a hump appeared off the shore.

A SCHOOLMASTER STALKS THE UNKNOWN

For A Full 14 Hours It Surged, And It Weaved, While the Humps Heaved and Undulated Like Magic

by Stewart McCulloch
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Photos by BEAVERBROOK NEWSPAPERS

One July morning in 1975, a secret picture was made in Scotland, and researchers say it helps prove conclusively the existence of the Loch Ness monster, or a family of monsters.

The photo was one of several taken by 42-year-old schoolmaster Alan Wilkins of Annan, Dumfriesshire. These pictures were studied by a committee of inquiry set up by the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau, and space project laboratories at Pasadena, California, where computers enlarge pictures from space.

Mr. Wilkins took the photographs during four sightings on one day—July 18, 1975—over a period of 14 hours, when he and his family, 39-year-old wife Margery, son Ian, eight, and daughter Helen, six, were at the camp observation site on the shore of the loch at Rubha Ban.

Mr. David James, Tory M.P. for North Dorset, founder and head of the bureau, arranged for them to be developed in two separate laboratories, and then the committee of inquiry sat. The inquiry included naturalists Sir Peter Scott and Richard Fritter.

The range at which the pictures were taken and the poor light spoiled all of them except a few.

Some showing the humps were examined and measured by R.A.F. intelligence photographic experts.

Mr. James said after the inquiry: "Alan Wilkins has made an extremely important contribution. His sightings were far and away the best over a period of 35 years."

Sir Peter Scott was convinced by them, and by underwater film made by a joint American-British expedition, that the monster exists.

The committee questioned Mr. Wilkins closely for four hours.

They studied and heard also the collected and collated written statements and tape recorded interviews of witnesses, all of which tallied.

The witnesses included a couple who had been strangers to him but helped him after the first sightings—holidaymakers Roger Selwyn of Washford, Somerset, and his fiancee Sylvia Williams.

Mr. Wilkins, ex-gunnery officer and amateur photo-

grapher, decided to let the *Sunday Express* be the first to show the pictures because, he says, it is a "responsible paper."

At his cottage in Summervale, Annan, Mr. Wilkins told me he had "fantastic luck."

"Most enthusiasts spend months, even years, trying to record a glimpse of Nessie," he said.

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For 14 patient hours, schoolmaster Alan Wilkins stalked the Loch Ness monster with a camera. Did Mr. Wilkins turn what was thought by sceptics to be fi tion into fact? Has it at last been established that a monster, or maybe monsters, live in the loch?

The experts who formed the committee of inquiry which pored over his pictures and statements think he has helped to do so. Certainly the evidence he gave them in writing makes fantastic reading.

Sighting No. 1

The Loch was flat calm. By 6:25 a.m. my son Ian and I were on watch with cameras close to the water's edge.

At 7:20 a long dark line appeared in mid loch off the western point. It sank slowly, only to reappear soon afterwards. It sank and rose two or three times.

On the final appearance I took two still photographs. I guessed the line must have been at least 20 feet long.

As I looked again through the binoculars I was just in time to see a large black shape rising out of the water in the same area. It seemed to be of great size and as it sank back again after only a few seconds' exposure the water swirled at its base, suggesting a bulky body below.

After a further appearance as a long line, it was suddenly gone.

Ian reported the sighting to my wife Margery who dismissed it as a joke and went back to sleep.

At about 10:05 I took two still photographs of two strange patches of large bubbles glistening in the sun off the far shore. The largest bubbles seemed to be about two feet in diameter and remained afloat a long time.

Sighting No. 2

At 10:12 I saw with my naked eye what I believed to be a black inflatable boat with outboard motor moving in the haze off the western point at a range later measured to be 2¼ miles or slightly more. I shot four still photographs [*for scale and definition reference*].

At the time I thought that the inflatable was gyrating with bursts of considerable speed implying a powerful outboard motor, and also that it was very high out of the water. Enlargements show a two-humped object changing to one high hump, bearing no resemblance to a boat at all.

At 10:15 a long dark line appeared in the water off the western point where I had lost sight of the "black inflatable." This was the same as the line of Sighting One.

I passed the binoculars to Margery, asking her what she could see in that area. She said that it looked like a coat with a man crouching down at the back.

"I have just photographed a boat," I replied, "and this is too low in the water."

By the time I had refocussed the bonoculars the object had become three well-spaced triangular humps. Seeing

Cameras at the ready, teacher Alan Wilkins and his 8-year-old son, Ian. This photo was taken by Alan's wife, Margery, as she watched them setting up equipment in the Rubha Ban loch area.

Another view of Loch Ness's mysterious shores, with craggy uplands in background. That's a cow, not a monster, parked in front.

that a man in the next caravan had his binoculars aimed at the target area I asked "What do you make of it?"

"I can see three humps," he replied.

He, Roger Selwyn, then came and stood alongside me with his fiancee, Sylvia Williams and helped to direct my camera work.

As we watched the humps moving across the loch there came a moment when only two humps were visible spaced further apart than at first. We exclaimed simultaneously at the considerable distance seaprating these two from a third rear object which to me seemed to be travelling on a different course diagonal to that of the leading two.

The humps slowed down as they approached the eastern shore and spent the last 15 minutes or so of the sighting in a dark band of off-shore water.

In this dark band the humps were sometimes stationary, sometimes moving to a new position as though searching for fish (a stream comes into the loch at this point).

There were nearly always two humps close together. I saw them sink and reappear on more than one occasion.

Just before a large yacht came past, one large hump rose high out of the water and sank back in. The sun glistened on the right flank of the hump which seemed to be light brown at that moment, though this may have been the colour of the wet reflective surface rather than the true colour of the animal.

Sighting No. 4

At 10:25 p.m., Miss Williams spotted three humps coming out of Invermoriston Bay at a range of about one mile. By this time the moon was taking over from the sun as the source of illumination, but the black humps showed clearly.

The Camera Equipment

Mr. Wilkins's equipment consisted of a Canon 35mm single lens reflex, type FTB, connected via Canon-Leica adaptor and Novoflex focusing bellows to a Novoflex 640mm focal length (28.15") telephoto lens. Sterling tripod with legs to maximum height, but centre column retractor. Ilford H.P. 4 film rated at ASA 400. Apertures: f14 to f16, exposures 1/250th to 1/500th second.

Our roles were reversed: Mr. Selwyn used his camera while Miss Williams and I kept continuous binocular watch. Steadying my 10 x 50 binoculars on the tripod I was able to witness at this close range the unforgettable sight of Nessie's leisurely progress across the loch.

As the three humps turned through 90 degrees to travel away from us. I was certain that they were part of the same animal. Their behaviour implied that the submerged body was moving in a slightly sinuous manner, with each hump turning in precise imitation of the one ahead.

They next turned east to pass again across our line of sight and began a series of hump changes. Miss Williams and I called out the hump changes in unison.

I am not certain how those changes were achieved. One of the humps would quite suddenly disappear or return: it was as difficult to analyse as a magician's sleight of hand.

The impression was of an animal of great muscular power and size, swimming at ease. The humps did not seem to be as high out of the water as during parts of Sighting Two. I would estimate them at about four feet high.

The last sight we had was of a single hump drifting slowly across the loch. This was at about 10:35 p.m. when the light was deteriorating and it was becoming very difficult to see detail at that range.

Plane Fear

Moments that merit description:—

On the approach of a jet aircraft flying at a low altitude down the east shore I said to Mr. Selwyn, "From what I have read I expect that this sound will make Nessie sink." So we held out binoculars unwaveringly on the humps.

They sank only after the aircraft had passed our own position i.e. had travelled well over two miles past Nessie. After a short interval they reemerged.

The approach from the south of a large yacht followed by a motor launch also seemed likely to put an end to the sighting since they were both motoring close to that shore.

As I filmed Mr. Selwyn said that he could see two humps on our side of the yacht, one showing just ahead, one just behind the yacht.

When the film was screened later Mr. Selwyn at once pointed to two marks in these positions well clear of the yacht and its wash.

[*The yacht was identified later as the Netherlands Antilles yacht Astral, with Captain Richard M. McIlvride aboard. It is 98 ft. long and has a 24 ft. beam*].

I caught up with the large yacht at the first canal lock by Dochgarroch, only to find that no one on board had seen anything though they were nearly all on deck at the time.

[*Mr. Wilkins estimated the range of sighting at 4,000 yards. In a sketch map he showed the course of "black inflatable" as a loop, but it was more complex "gyrating in fairly tight circles." The impression was of someone testing out or showing off in an inflatable powered by a large outboard.*]

Sighting No. 3

At about 9:25 p.m. I saw through binoculars a black patch in roughly the same position as Sighting One. The water seemed to be swirling.

Two angular humps emerged slowly and majestically, the right hand one higher and larger.

I am not sure whether the two humps joined on to each other or whether they were separated by a very small patch of water.

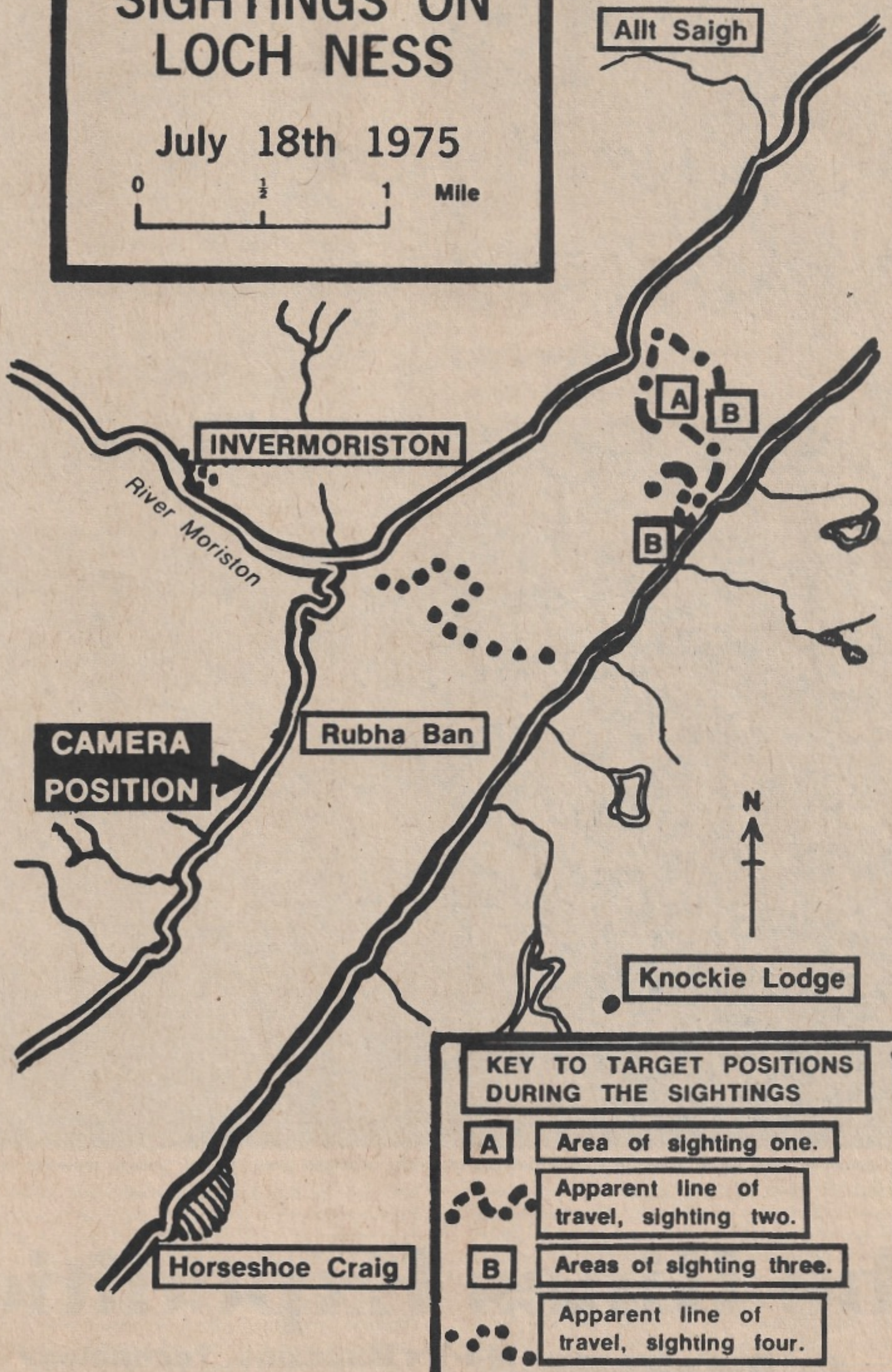
Shortly afterwards Miss Williams spotted a small hump, once again off the east shore. This was visible for some time and was seen by a fourth witness, Mr. Sam Russell (of Kemsing, Kent), who stayed with us during the next sighting period.

[*No photographs were taken during this sighting which was at a range of about 4,000 yards.*] □

SIGHTINGS ON LOCH NESS

July 18th 1975

0 ½ 1 Mile



KEY TO TARGET POSITIONS DURING THE SIGHTINGS

- A — Area of sighting one.
- Apparent line of travel, sighting two.
- B — Areas of sighting three.
- Apparent line of travel, sighting four.